



Creating jobs, improving forests in Idaho's Silver Valley

Interstate 90 winds through it, providing an artery for commerce between western Montana, northern Idaho, and eastern Washington. Its rich history and abundant natural resources helped shape the beginnings of our state. Its surrounding forests and mountains are a destination for tourists and recreationists of all kinds, and hundreds of Idahoans call it home.

The Silver Valley in Idaho's Panhandle is a gem in the Gem State for many reasons.

But this valley and its surrounding forests also were targeted in 2008 as a high priority area to address the impacts of forest insects and disease, along with wildfire threats and smoke. It also was identified as a region where more jobs could be created through timber harvest and woody biomass utilization.



Idaho's Silver Valley forests. White pine, Idaho's state tree (below), grows in abundance on the mountainside.

With help from the U.S. Forest Service State and Private Forestry Branch, the **Idaho Department of Lands helped facilitate the creation of the Shoshone County Forest Health Collaborative**, through which a string of projects have started and will continue this summer.

Shoshone County has been the chief organizer of the effort, inviting agencies, industry, landowners, and environmental groups to the table early on to address the issues and taking the initiative to submit a grant proposal to fund the effort.



Located entirely in Shoshone County, the project areas encompass 220,000 acres of Wildland Urban Interface and seven cities along a 40-mile stretch of Interstate 90.

Some highlights from the projects that are improving forests and paving the way for more jobs in the Silver Valley include:



Thinning and pruning improves forest health. Fire threats also are reduced when the downed material is removed or burned. The Silver Valley Economic Development Corporation currently is working to build a Forest Products Campus to utilize cut material such as this.

> A **timber sale project planned for this summer on federal forestland will reduce wildfire risks and protect the City of Mullan's water supply** by logging dense understory trees. The harvest also will form fuel breaks around the community and provide better access for fire fighters.

> A forest biomass inventory and private landowner survey conducted by Shoshone County was used to inform the recently completed "Forest Products Campus Feasibility Study." The study examines how to develop businesses that make products from

forest biomass. "While not a panacea, a Forest Products Campus within the County could provide both a significant number of jobs as well as a cost-effective way to remove woody biomass from the forest," the study indicates. **The Silver Valley Economic Development Corporation currently is working make the Forest Products Campus a reality.**

> Along with the work on federal lands, **more than 1,000 acres recently were thinned on private lands**, reducing fuel loads, improving forest health, and generating woody biomass for use in private markets.

The Idaho Department of Lands and other project partners envision that these projects will become the model for promoting rural community vitality through small-scale projects that that restore and improve forests and utilize biomass to create local jobs.

[Read a full project summary here.](#)



Members of the Shoshone Forest Health Collaborative discuss forest conditions surrounding the City of Mullan. Harvest operations will begin this summer.



Henry Nipp, Shoshone County Fuel Mitigation Manager, and Joyce Jowdy, IDL Grants Specialist, review proposed thinning and fuel mitigation plans on private lands.



Consulting Forester Ed Pommerening oversees the thinning, pruning and fuel mitigation operations on the trees he planted 30 years ago.



Idaho Department of Lands

*Trusted stewards of Idaho's resources,
from main street to mountain top*

STAY CONNECTED



<http://www.idl.idaho.gov>

SIGN UP to receive this newsletter
by e-mailing comments@idl.idaho.gov